THE EYE:

BY OBADIAH OPTIC.

——VARIOUS OBJECTS FROM THE SENSE,
VARIOUSLY REPRESENTING. MILTON.

Vol. I.] THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1808. [No. 6.

Vires acquirit eundo.

It acquires strength as it progresses.

IN my last number, I laid it down as incontrovertible, that "*nothing so enervates man as vice, nothing so prostrates a love of liberty and independence as luxury.*" It shall now be my business, in this, and some future numbers, to shew that nothing has *a greater influence than industry*, to weaken our vices, strengthen our virtues, and raise us to eminence, both as individuals and members of society.

Man is a creature much influenced by habit. It commences its operations, as soon as he breathes the vital air, and ceases not whilst he enjoys life. If therefore the lessons of this singular teacher lead in the paths of propriety, if the young pupil be early engaged in virtuous pursuits, and taught the true value of time, vice, with all her allurements, will not be able to entice him from the flowery paths of happiness. But should he be left without a guide, to wander as fancy, or imagination may direct, should he be engaged in no worthy pursuit, but suffered to loiter away his precious time, a habit of indolence will be formed which, probably, all his future exertions may not be able effectually to destroy; and should that unfortunately be the case, advantageous to none, a burden to himself, unheeded in society, without the smile of love, nay, not even cheered by enjoying his own esteem, he will return an useless clod to his mother earth. Man truly in the morning of his days stands in a very alarming situation, because his mind, like the yielding wax, is well prepared to receive the impression of any stamp; but here, as in all the kingdom of Providence, the infinite wisdom of Deity appears. Our

wants call us into action, and their constant return incites to unremitted exertion; hence, tho' indolence, the hand-maid of vice, may cry "a little more sleep, a little more slumber," want, whose demands are imperious, banishes the deceiver, stimulates the youth to active pursuits, and to form a habit of industry.

Industry knows no difference in trades, occupations or callings. It may be justly defined a constant exertion of our powers in any employment which has been the object of choice. Its great advantages are, it keeps us constantly engaged, and consequently leaves no avenue open by which vice may enter; it renders us useful to ourselves and to society; for, thereby able to support ourselves, we glory in our independence, and are not burthensome to the community in which we live.

It is highly worthy of being remarked, how very useful to themselves and also to others are even the weakest animals, by the exercise of unremitted industry. Behold the ant, that feeble creature, by what wonderful exertions she overcomes all opposition, and in summer lays up provision for the winter. The bee, an architect of no mean skill, with what labour and surprising ingenuity does she fashion her habitation, with what industry store it with honey, which to us is so delicious. If man possessed half the industry of either, with his strength, his comprehensive faculties, ingenuity, encreased by the wisdom and experience of so many ages, and an extensive acquaintance with all the liberal arts, what might he not accomplish! But his exertions are not equal to his powers.

I have been led to the consideration of industry, by the alarming state in which we are at present: We can rationally expect nothing but war. The active springs therefore of the whole community must be put in motion; and the ingenuity of every individual placed in a state of requisition. We have formerly, in a great measure, depended on Europeans for our clothes of all kinds; but let us not for one moment harbour the thought, that we were compelled so to act from necessity. America can afford a sufficiency of all things to supply the wants of all its inhabitants, if even they were an hundred times encreased; all we want is industry, and that originates in ourselves.

It is remarkable, that in all nations, women have ever been amazingly patriotic; their exertions have never been wanting in the cause of liberty; they always stimulate to noble deeds,

and the pusillanimous never receive their smiles: At this moment we require their aid: We must spin, weave and dress the cloth of which we stand in need, and banish the flimsy stuffs of Europe. The ladies must step forward to save their country from foreign vassalage, for *as long as we depend on any nation in the world, even for a hob-nail, so far we are not free.* No time is to be lost; let our ladies appear in their homespun suits; let not a yard of foreign cloth be worn; let us mark him as no friend to the prosperity of his country, who, for the sake of wearing a finer coat, must send for it to England, France, or Spain. Vice indeed stands in need of paint, patches, and costly clothes, to set off and conceal her deformity; but virtue smiles in the blush of industry, the healthful cheek, the unbroken constitution, and the life full of usefulness.

OBADIAH OPTIC.

ORIGINAL.

THE AMERICAN IDLER.—No. VI.

Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit. HORACE.

Amidst his failings still some virtues trace,
Some fair memorials and some deeds of grace.
MERRY'S *pains of memory.*

PITTACUS, whom Greece ranked among the number of her sages, at a time when Mitylene, his country, was in a state of the utmost slavery and debasement, by his exertions brought her peace and prosperity. Possessing absolute power, he used it to controul the vicious, and bring to punishment the guilty, to enact laws for the preservation of order, and to give permanancy to every valuable institution. Having finished his work of legislation, when the hearts of all good men were warmed with affection towards him, he abdicated, without ostentation, the sovereign power. When asked his reason for so doing, he replied, "I was terrified at seeing PERIANDER of Corinth become the tyrant, after he had been the father of his people: *It is too difficult always to be virtuous.*"

This conduct of PITTACUS will be viewed in very different lights by different persons. Some may deny him his due merit, because he shrunk from the possibility of doing evil without resisting its impulses. Because he feared a time might arrive, when he should be assimilated to PERIANDER,

he gave up his authority and retired to a private station, thereby depriving the people of the advantages they had heretofore derived from his wisdom and virtue. "The man," say they, "who had raised his country to so honourable a situation, was surely best calculated to maintain her in that state. But PITTACUS deprived himself of that honour, by looking forward for a time of mental depravity, which might induce him to undo what he had done before."

In this light however, I cannot view it; he was but a man, and adding to a spirit of unbounded philanthropy, the humility of a Christian, he knew that "the human heart was deceitful above all things." To doubt then its purity, and to question its firmness, was to err on the side of prudence. He saw himself in the possession of uncontrouled dominion, and able to make what use of his power he thought proper. It was then, probably, that the frailties of humanity began to assail him; pride and ambition might have commenced their insidious operations in his breast; he felt, he feared them, and resigned that command which had he retained, would have rendered his subjects miserable, whom he had before toiled to make happy. Alas, "it is too difficult always to be virtuous."

That "no one is wise at all times," is a maxim, the truth of which is undeniable. No one then is always free from the assaults of passion, the impulses of anger, or the insinuations of ambition. To these, PITTACUS was obnoxious, and like him, every child of mortality. Hence, when we consider the character of man, we should always recollect his natural failings, and make the proper allowances for them when we see them doing wrong. This is what we are taught to do by the volume of inspiration; this is what the uncontaminated child of nature would always do, if left to form his own conclusions; and this is what charity always dictates. We know that the world abounds with vice and error, and that the history of man is little more than a "detail of follies and of crimes:" But while this knowledge tends to excite in the breasts of the philanthropical, emotions of sorrow and regret, it should teach them to search out whatever was of "good report," and bring it into view, that it might receive its proper praise, and excite emulation. The bad deeds of men speak loudly of themselves by the consequences they produce, their virtues often "blush unseen." Why then do we see the errors of the imprudent so much descried and blazoned around, while their better qualities are unlooked for? Man has always been spo-

ken of as a creature fond of novelty and captivated by whatever is extraordinary; but in this case, the contrary seems to be the fact. Wickedness every where abounds, and where known, is never unnoticed; frailties and imperfections are common, every day discloses them, and yet they are eagerly sought out; on the other hand, instances of virtue and goodness are rare, but they never so much raise their possessor, as the former depress and degrade him in the estimation of men:—Thus SHAKSPEARE wrote with truth,

The evil which men do, lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones:

And in proof of this assertion, we may add from the same author, the following—

The aspiring boy who fired the Epherian dome,
Outlives in fame the pious fool who built it.

Why man is so weak and irresolute, why he is as prone "to evil as the sparks fly upward," and why he is so greatly under the government of bad passions, is not for me to determine. Certain however it is, that though he walks superiour amid creation, he seldom is employed in musing praise, or grateful adoration;* and seldom do his actions, or the tenor of his life bespeak the favourite of heaven. That he is never perfect, is a truth which reason, religion, and observation establish; and if some are found more weak than others, they are also more unhappy, and consequently more entitled to our pity, not our scorn or abhorrence: If then men of great talents are seen a prey to failings which counteract their worth, let us recollect that every one if weighed with the balance of strict justice would be found wanting, and lament that they are so little able to promote their own happiness; for you will oftimes see them "pierced through with many sorrows" the fruit of their irregularities.

Many and sharp the num'rous ills,
Inwoven in our frame;
More pointed still we make ourselves
Regret, remorse and shame. BURNS.

HUMANUS was a character to whose lot fell as many virtues and imperfections as ever centered in one man. The latter

* ——Man superiour walks
Amid the glad creation, musing praise
And looking lively gratitude. THOMSON.

it may be said were acquired, the former innate. He early lost his mother, and his father was too much engrossed by other concerns to pay any attention to the morals or education of his son. Thus, without a friend to advise, or a parent to direct him, he was left to follow the bent of his inclinations; and being of a social disposition, he sought for company, and unfortunately found that kind alone in which his understanding could not be improved; nor his mind expanded. The ill effects of such society were soon visible, and though they subjected him to occasional reproach, no measures were taken to do away their cause by removing him from it; neither were his good qualities, which often showed themselves, cherished by commendation, or strengthened by good counsel.

As he grew up and entered upon the stage of life, he discovered principles the most opposite, and conduct the most contradictory. One day his profession was attended to with the greatest industry; the next, neglected for some scheme of pleasure. One day he was seen carousing with a set of bacchanalian friends and reduced to a state of intoxication and beastiality; the next, he was searching the abodes of misery, poverty and sickness, seeking woes to alleviate, and sufferings to lighten. When the scourge of pestilence ravaged our devoted city, and had arrived at its greatest height of danger, he was employed in passing from one scene of sickness and distress to another, providing attendance for one, relieving the wants of another, and where death had rendered aid unavailing, seeing its victims decently committed to the earth. But when these times of woe were gone, he again returned to his courses of pleasure and debauchery, to which he at length fell a victim before he had arrived at the fortieth year of his age.

Such was HUMANUS.—Strange contradiction; strange that vice and virtue should so strongly influence one person, and each be so uncontrouled while it was ruler.—Had he, been properly attended to when young, had his vicious propensities been subjected to the domination of reason and parental authority, he would not now have been held up as an example of the weakness of humanity, but as a model for imitation: He would not have been prematurely cut off a victim to vice and evil passions, but might have lived long to be reverenced and honoured.

"Alas how oft on guilt's victorious car,
The spoils of virtue are in triumph borne."

May the consideration of his good deeds, the recollection of his many virtues, and the tears and prayers of the sorrowful whom he comforted, influence the recording angel to blot out his offences from the book of remembrance, and let every philanthropist drop a tear when he reflects "how numerous are the frailties flesh is heir to," of which HUMANUS was a lamentable example. J.

ORIGINAL.

THE SPECTACLES.—No. VI.

——— Learn from the wisdom of age,
And be cheer'd by the sallies of youth. COWPER.

A SECLUSION from the rest of our species, is not only a mark of weakness, but it is in some degree criminal. He must indeed be a selfish creature, who would devote his hours to improvement without the intention of imparting some of his acquirements to others; and he is equally despicable whose pride persuades him that nothing is to be gained from social intercourse. I consider one that dwells in continual retirement, as a being who supposes himself to be the 'fairest flower of creation,' and imagines none worthy of enjoying his society; whose passions or vices have rendered him intolerable to himself, and buried to the world, he attributes to it the defects which are truly his own. Those who have advocated the pleasures of solitude betray ignorance, or a want of sincerity: Experience proves, that he who delights to mingle with the world, and participate in the charms of society, is generally the most virtuous; while he who is immured in a solitary cell flies to the gratification of his passions, and becomes the dupe of sensuality. Solitude is inconsistent with our natural inclinations, and we seek society as a refuge from the cares and ills of life. It is even a source of satisfaction to sympathise in the woes of others; and the happiness of those whom we esteem, always affords participation. Our happiness is incomplete when others do not share in it, and our misery is alleviated by the condolence of friends. From society we derive instruction without labour, and acquire through the channel of entertainment, the result of another's assiduity. Emulation is one of the strongest incentives to study, and when we are assured that learning will procure us respect, we are irresistibly impelled to obtain it; the dread of disgrace, and the fear of ap-

pearing ignorant, provoke us to diligence. That "hidden information is little preferable to concealed ignorance," is strongly impressed on our belief, and we communicate our knowledge, if not for the purpose of instructing others, at least for the sake of our own reputation: And as all are of this disposition, conversation holds out mutual advantages. The ear, the most faithful conduit to the mind, receives instruction without toil, and the memory, when impressed in this way, retains it without exertion. There is an imperceptible progress in improvement which the most inattentive and unwilling must receive from proper companions. "Noscitur a sociis."—A man is known by his company—and that has always been the criterion for judging of his talents or virtues; emulation spurs him on to an equal footing with respect to abilities, and shame prevents him from degrading himself in the eyes of his associates with any immoral conduct. A man cannot be ignorant, who associates with proper companions, and it is just as impossible that he should be wise, who keeps no company. The society of the males forms the mind to virtue—that of the females makes virtue interesting.—Man to have intercourse with his own sex only, would be disgusting, and to confine himself exclusively to the ladies, would be a splendid, but worthless jewel. T.

ORIGINAL.

MUSHROOM.—No. IV.

A QUAKER gentleman enquiring for me? Yes sir, said my housekeeper, but not finding you at home, he left this letter, placing in my hands the following communication:—

FRIEND FUNGUS,

SINCE its first publication, I have carefully perused "*The Eye*," and thus far my hopes have been realized—the principles it inculcates will bear the plummet of rectitude, and the Editor swerves not from the onward path. Through the "*Spectacles*" many good things are discovered, and so different is their quality from all others, that instead of shewing us the 'mote in our brother's eye,' it plainly discovers to us that there is 'a beam in our own.'—Though it hath been said by a wise man, that "idleness covereth a man with rags,"

yet in the "*Idler*" do we find a worthy companion, whose mouth is filled with the words of wisdom, and however contradictory it may appear to those who only know his *name*, one who *laboureth much* for the destruction of vice.

Thy mite also tendeth that way, and deserveth commendation. Gird on the armour of truth, couch thy lance, and shrink not from the combat; be not disheartened at the different shapes the many-headed monster will assume, for virtue must triumph. But be careful, that whilst thou art prying about to spy out and correct the faults of others, thine own garment be unspotted. Are thine own hands clean? Canst thou go about and do good whilst thou art a SLAVE-HOLDER? Can thy spirit shake off the trammels of earth, and soaring into immeasurable space, contemplate the attributes of that BEING who created us all free, while the limbs of old *Deborah* are fettered by the shackles of slavery? No, thou canst not.

"The shivering Icelander and sun-burnt Moor," are alike thy brethren. Put away then from thee the accursed thing; let not the tears of those that are in bondage moisten the wings of immortality and prevent thy rising to the mansions of rest.

Thou wilt think it strange that I should use words of such seeming harshness in this my first communication—they are the words of truth my friend; I am not one of those who, because it is polite, say one thing and mean another. I could not invite thee to a bye place to cut thy throat or shoot thee through the head with a ball, and conclude the invitation with thy "humble servant," as is the fashion of the times.

Thou hast expressed a wish for our better acquaintance, and I have not been backward in meeting it, in doing which I trust thou wilt not lose sight of the *motive* of thy friend,

EPHRAIM.

My readers will judge of my emotions on perusing this epistle. I was in it charged with the commission of a crime in which I never had the least participation; I was ranked among men—men! shall I say? no, monsters! for whom I have the utmost detestation—dealers in human flesh!—and by one too who does not appear to accuse rashly; how shall I acquit myself? My first determination was to call in *Deborah*, and ask her if she knew what slavery was?—if she would exchange the shelter of my roof for *freedom*?—She appeared before me, but my tongue refused its office; the remem-

brance of my father—my mother—the unalloyed pastime of my boyish days—the long abandoned dwelling of my ancestors, all rushed upon my brain; my eyes grew dim, I beckoned her to retire: A drop fell upon the letter of EPHRAIM—it could not have been a tear, it certainly was the perspiration from my brow, as the room was just then insupportably warm. I gave the letter a second reading, became more at ease, and sat down and sketched the history of *Deborah* as far as it has come to my knowledge.

She was taken by my grandfather when only eight years old, from under the hand of a cruel "task master" in one of the tobacco fields of Virginia; it is true a price was paid for her, but it was paid to ameliorate her sufferings; at ten years old she was given to my mother as a dowry, on the morning of her marriage with my father; in him she found more of the friend than the master; no sounding thong scourged her from a miserable hovel to the labours of the field; her skin was never bleached through a tattered garment by the scorching rays of the sun; my father treated her so while living, that she wept over him when dead! Did he deserve the name of slave-holder! She is now under my care, the third generation in which she has lived, and it shall be my pleasure to see that not one of her grey hairs shall be rooted out by the canker of sorrow; and however great the crime of enslaving her may be, I will not commit a greater by setting her *free* at the age of sixty years to *beg her bread*.

FUNGUS.

ORIGINAL.

THE TORTOISE.—No. I.

"A thing of shreds and scraps,"

MR. OPTIC,

AS it is indispensibly necessary an author should have one good line, or part of a line, to render his essays in some degree interesting, you will immediately see the propriety of my mottoizing this paper with a demi-sentence from the writings of one who ranks high in the circle of fashionable literature.—But to my subject, and indeed sir, the subject is what I have already written, for so it fell out—I am a person of a restless habit, and having committed to paper the above introduction, my pen involuntarily dropped from my hand—I

rose from my tripod, left my table, and with hasty step was translated from the *seat* of literature to mix in the bustle of the busy world. I was accosted by a pauper, with "Please your honour!"—his hat and staff in one hand, and presenting a paper with the other; I took it from him and read—"The bearer is recommended to the charitable—he has been a soldier—in the early part of his life has exerted himself in the cause of his country, but by misfortune is reduced to indigence; he is too old and infirm to procure a livelihood by labour, but is an honest man."—It was a powerful appeal to the feeling heart—I could not—I did not try to resist the first impulse it produced in mine, I gave him the price of a beggar's blessing, and he was not illiberal in his measure of what cost him nothing; after repeated benedictions, he left me; and I, as though having accomplished the object for which I left my study, returned. My preface caught my eye, I read it—what a contrast I perceived, how far beneath the beggar's petition did it appear in my estimation! And was it because language is more impressive when applied to cases of misery? or, was it that my heart beat in unison with the intention of the writer?—I know not why, but at this moment the thought struck me, perhaps the representation was false—be it so—no arguments could so forcibly engage the sympathy of a fellow citizen as "He has been a soldier—in the early part of his life has exerted himself in the cause of his country—he is an honest man." The writer of the paper knew human nature—he well knew the strings of the human heart, and skilfully touched those, and those only which he was confident would produce such harmony as should lull all doubt to rest. Had I the abilities of this beggar, the age should not want a successful reformer, "*The Eye*" should glance with encreased energy on the vices which are daily introduced into our city; never would I degrade such talents by using them to mask idleness that it might be imposed on my fellow beings in the character of honest indigence; nor should they be employed to gild with specious names such irregularities as tend to enervate the sinews of my country and ruin her rising hope.—But I hear a confused noise in the street, and as I am anxious to "Catch the manners living as they rise"—I must subscribe myself, Yours, &c.

TIM TITULAR.

Poetical Department.

ORIGINAL.

POOR ANNA:—OR, THE IMPRESSMENT.

A TALE.

THE storm's rude blast unheeded blew
With ruthless rage on ANNA's head;
A storm more furious long she knew,
For long had placid reason fled.

Her bosom swell'd with many a sigh,
And phrenzy held despotic reign
O'er all her pow'rs—I ask'd her why?
She answer'd, "Sir, I'm not insane!

"A raging fever of the mind,
Since from my heart they tore my love;
And was it, sir, not most unkind?
But yet we'll meet in realms above.

"'Twas when across the main we ply'd,
They 'press'd him from his ANNA's arms;
With fury forc'd him o'er the side,
Now what on earth can yield me charms?

"My WILLIAM, brave in honour's cause,
Laments his ANNA's fate I know;
My head the blasting lightning draws,—
O quench the flame thou driving snow!"

Here she essay'd, with frantic speed,
To mount a steep and slipp'ry bank;
The effort did her strength exceed,
She, fainting, on my bosom sank.

I bore her to my humble cot,
And kind attention life restor'd;
Yet still she wildly mourns her lot,
And nought to her can joy afford.

"Britannia's navy," oft she cries,
"Holds all my life—my WILLIAM's there
Imprison'd—lo, he sinks, he dies,
I see his spirit in the air!"

ALICIAN.